

## BOB AND MAY.

Bob and May were sweethearts. Of course they were; that's what they had been learning ever since Bob, a stripling of 20, had come out from Tennessee to the Texas Panhandle with the family.

In those days May was a bright-haired, high-strung little girl of 14 whom Bob never called nor thought of as "red-headed."

Bob was a strong, good humored boy, not a bit afraid of work, and he had a way with him that gave him command of men and creatures. He rose rapidly in old man Love's employ from simple cow puncher to wagon boss, then foreman, and when he was only 25 went, with the approval and good will of his employer, to take the position of ranch manager for a Boston company.

All the world loves a lover. Bob was such a whole hearted one, his state of mind was so potent, he took such delight in it, wore his chains with such open pride and enthusiasm, that all the Panhandle felt with and for him.

And old man Love was pleased enough with the match and greatly given to bragging of Bob as a coming adjunct to the Love greatness, until the tragedy of the one horned brindle cow, which tore things all up generally, threatened to sever two loving hearts and darken forever Bob's and May's happy horizon.

This old cow—worth perhaps \$7—bopped up at one of the roundups sporting, in addition to the B N of the Boston National, which was facetiously known as the "Bean" brand, old man Love's (xxx).

Though very uncommon, such accidents may occur in the haste and confusion of branding without necessarily implying dishonesty on some one's part. While they do sometimes result in fights and killings they are easily enough adjusted between reasonable people, since any clever cattleman can readily tell which brand is of the longer standing.

But any cowboy on the range would have told you that while old man Love was square enough himself he was a crazy crank about the sacredness of his brand. His long suit was to jump up and down and swear that it never yet was on anything that wasn't his own. He invariably claimed an animal that bore it in addition to another brand (as did this old cow) however plainly it showed as the newer of the two, though as a matter of fact his branding irons were handled by just as many careless cowboys as any others.

If Bob had known what that aged and damaged brindle cow was going to cost him, he might perhaps have blinked his obvious duty and let old man Love have her—in the face of right and reason.

But he was not the man to be backed down by any one, and he dared the worst—and got it!

He held the cow for his company, after a fierce contest, and old man Love went home raging, to give his distorted version of the affair, issue orders that no member of his family was to speak to or of Bob from that time forth, and to remark significantly that he had far rather see a child of his married to a horse thief than to a person capable of such behavior.

Communication between the lovers had since been managed, once or twice, by the utmost stealth and secrecy. Having, by this means, been assured of his sweetheart's steadfastness and readiness Bob sent her word by one of her father's cowboys to ride a good horse past the half way branding pen, armed himself with a license and hung around the Triple X ranch for a week.

When May finally found the opportunity to slip away in the most careless manner, with one of the men's sombreros on and in the face of threatening weather, she received a rapturous welcome from the long banished Bob, and they promptly headed their ponies for Squire Wiley's, just the other side of Roaring creek, who was supposed to be holding himself in readiness for their visit.

What Mexican or other paid spy or what unfriendly or envious hand carried the news to old man Love will not be known, but he burst into one of his near cow camps at dinner, shortly after Bob and May's departure, like a roaring South African lion with mustard in his eye.

"The boys"—who knew well enough what was afoot, and what would be asked of them—dropped their tin cups and plates, jumped on their waiting ponies and were out of hailing distance before he fairly lit in their midst.

But old Hank Pearsall, the cook, was a new man, not long from southwest Texas, neither knowing of nor caring particularly for Bob Holly and his love affair. So he stood at his official post, at the tail end of the chuck wagon, and gave amiable attention to the impassioned harangue and singular antics of this new and entertaining employer.

Being commanded to come along and assist in dispersing Bob and rescuing May, he mounted a serious appearing but fitful tempered buckskin colored pony, with one white eye and much symmetry of bone—as much of a character in its way as Hank was in his—and started, with considerable interest and curiosity.

They rode hard and were near overhauling the lovers within a mile of Roaring creek. But while pursuer and pursued pushed on at their utmost pace another factor was coming with a hundred times greater speed to take a hand in the game.

The dry bed of Roaring creek was just before them, beyond that a tiny rise, then an arroyo, and beyond that again the roof of the justice's house, just in sight. As Bob and May clattered over the creek bed and scrambled up onto the rise beyond, both looked back, and their ponies stopped, tossing their heads, pricking their ears and snorting at a curious humming sound that suddenly seemed to fill all the air about.

"Hurry up, darling," cried Bob,

throwing out a hand to catch May's; "it's a big storm coming from above." But before they could descend the slope to cross the dry arroyo in front it was running from bank to bank and brimming over with a sudden flood of red, muddy water.

And even above the noise of the flood before they heard a sound like the angry shouting of furious multitudes. Looking backward and up the creek whence the sounds came they saw a great, tumbling, shuddering wall—pushing before it and bearing upon its crest all imaginable sorts of debris—advancing down the dry creek bed with such a thunderous onslaught that the little mound on which they stood shook and seemed fairly to lower under their feet. They looked about them. The arroyo ran into the creek below. Above, both it and the creek had flooded out until they joined. Their little mound was an island, momentarily growing smaller, surrounded on every side by raging torrents, in which were driven and whirled whole trees, full grown cattle, with sometimes a fence post whose trailing wires had caught in their barbs all manner of ghastly wreckage.

Up came the water about them; down fell the big hail.

"It's a cloudburst above, darling," said Bob. "It won't last long—the water won't cover this rise."

"I'm not afraid, Bob," said May, with very white lips. "I'm glad I came anyhow. If we've got to die, we'll die together, and the way I've felt for the last three weeks I'm sure that's a heap better than living apart."

Bob jumped off his pony and lifted May from hers. The hail was coming bigger and beat cruelly upon them. He wrapped his slicker about her, pushed the ponies close together and sheltered her with them and his own body as best he could.

"We won't die," he said, "but, poor little girl, what an awful storm I've dragged you out into!"

Just then, from the farther bank of the creek, above the awful howling of the storm, came this intelligent command in old man Love's ear splitting tones:

"May Love! You come here to me this minute!" And May laughed hysterically.

"Well, he can't get at us anyway—but the hail can. Oh, look at your poor hands! Oh, Bob, I can't bear it—put the slicker back on!"

"Why, honey," said Bob as the tears came in earnest now, "I'd get pounded just the same anyhow, and you must let me have the comfort of keeping some of it off you—it isn't a patch on the way your pa would do me if he could get me right now."

While the storm raged and the water rose nearly to their feet, Hank Pearsall had the almost exclusive benefit of old man Love's remarks, since only his wildest shrieks reached the young couple, who were too much absorbed in each other to heed either him or the storm very much.

These remarks disagreed with Mr. Pearsall, who was notoriously a man of judgment and observation.

"What's the matter with that young feller?" he queried angrily. "Watch him a-standin' to the north'ard uv his gal, a-keepin' the hail offen her! He ain't no chump! If he keeps that lick up right through, he'll make a better husband'n what you ever did!"

About this time, the hail ceasing, the expectant justice came down to the farther bank of the arroyo. The water was going down visibly, but its roar was still considerable.

"Ho, Bob!" yelled the justice, above its sound, "got your license?"

Bob took it out and waved it above his head.

Old man Love could not from where he stood hear a word, but he surmised what had been said, and the sight of the document was a livid red rag to the bull.

"I dare ye to marry 'em," he screamed. "I dare ye to do it!" And in an ecstasy of rage and anxiety he forced his pony down into the foaming creek among the whirling drift, where he was promptly pitched off by the terrified creature, which instantly returned.

Pearsall, at the risk of his own life, had to fish him out, receiving plenty of abuse for his pains and returning it with bitter irony.

In two minutes' time the shallower arroyo was fordable, though the creek, down which big drift continued to come, was not. Bob set May on her pony, mounted his own and prepared to ride out. The sight of the justice—a plains Cupid, with boots, slicker and cowboy hat—preparing to take charge of the pair was too much for old man Love, and dismounted as he was he plunged, in a delirium of rage, into the creek, spluttering and yelling:

"Stop! Hold on! You just dare!" May hesitated, frightened, but old Hank Pearsall yanked her father out again and set him on dry land, snorting:

"Doggone ye! I pulled y' out onct before! What fer cain't ye stay out? Huh?"

"When ye try buckin agin a boy like that, backed by a Texas norther, ye're agoin to git left—don't ye know it? That kid's got a double cinch on provocation! Bet ye he had this hyer storm staked out!"

"Go it, feller! Go it, gal! I'm with ye ever time—I'm fer ye! Yer the right sort! I wouldn't hender ye fer all the durned old snake bit fools in Texas! I'll jist gether up the scraps o' this ole eejit an tote 'em back to the ranch."

And as May and Bob rode off, tattered, beaten, draggled, but obviously blissful and jaunty, a faint hail followed them:

"Goodby, kids—wish yer joy! Come on, ole calamity!"—Alice MacGowan in Chicago Herald.

A Paris paper announces the discovery of a second Pompeii near Laurium. It states that an entire town, with streets and houses, has been found buried beneath a mass of earth.

## What He Said.

In an English court a man was on trial who could speak nothing but Irish, and an interpreter was called and duly sworn. The prisoner at once asked him some question, and he replied. The judge interposed sharply.

"What does the prisoner say?" demanded the judge.

"Nothing, my lord," answered the interpreter.

"How dare you say that when we all heard him? What was it?"

"My lord," said the interpreter, beginning to tremble, "it had nothing to do with the case."

"If you don't answer, I'll commit you. What did he say?"

"Well, my lord, you'll excuse me, but he said, 'Who's that old woman with the red bed curtain round her sitting up there?'"

The court roared.

"And what did you say?" asked the judge, looking a little uncomfortable.

"I said: 'Whist, ye spalpeen! That's the old boy that's going to hang yez.'"

Youth's Companion.

## Forbidden Fruit.



"Bessy, do you think she'd let me hold that doll for a minute if I wuz to ask her?"—Life.

## Very Disappointing.

"Now look at that letter," said young Summers as he threw a scented square envelope across the cafe table. "What would you think to find that in your letterbox when you came into the club?"

"Why," said the visitor, picking it up and noticing the delicate handwriting, "I should think that some fair young woman was going to invite me to drink tea with her tomorrow afternoon."

"Do you know, that's just what I thought when I saw it, and that's why I am disgusted. The other night at the horse show I was introduced to an awfully pretty girl who lives up the avenue. The next night I met her again at the Van Hartman's, and we had quite a chat. She promised to send me her card. I thought this was it. It's a shame."

"Oh, but she may send it yet. I wouldn't despair so soon."

"It isn't that. It's the idea of getting such a letter as that instead of the one I expected. Don't you see what it is?"

"Do you want me to read it?"

"You may if you care for such things. There is nothing private about things that gain your confidence under false pretenses of perfumed and sealed envelopes and feminine hands. It's getting outrageous that one should at every turn have his heart set beating with visions of pretty notes, only to find printed slips telling you of the virtues of the latest clothes cleaning establishment and the low priced menu of the new restaurant on the corner. That note informs me that I can have my trousers pressed regularly once a week for 25 cents, and the wagon will call to get them. Isn't that a romantic message to crave respectful attention in polite and insinuating guise?"—New York Tribune.

## Getting Even.

A prominent Englishman, Lord D., a provincial hater of America and Americans, was dining lately in Paris with the British minister, and next to him at the table was a noted Newport belle, Miss X. The conversation had drifted to a discussion of things American. It is needless to say that Lord D. made some pretty disagreeable remarks about some Americans he had met and some Yankee customs he abhorred.

"Why, d'y'e know," he continued, with an almost unendurable want of tact, "that at some of the places I dined in America I saw people eat with their knives and spill their soup on the tablecloth."

Miss X. was thoroughly provoked by this time, but she replied with an apparent unconcern:

"What poor letters of introduction you must have had, my lord!"

There was no more unpleasant talk about America that evening.—Harper's Bazar.

## What Hurt Him.

"I don't mind your refusing me cold victuals, ma'am," said the time worn and travel stained pilgrim at the kitchen door, buttoning his faded remnant of a coat under his chin, "but when you call me a worthless tramp you do me a cruel injustice. I have a standing offer of \$15, ma'am, from one of the best medical colleges in this country for my corporeity, just as it stands."

And with a stately bow he turned away, shuffled down the steps and carried his insulted corporeity to the next kitchen.—Chicago Tribune.

## Explained.

Teacher—Tommy, have you found out the difference between a republic and a monarchy yet?

Tommy—I asked pa about it, and he said that in a monarchy the people obey their rulers because they respect them, and in a republic they obey the losses 'cause they can't help it.—Indianapolis Journal.

## Precisely.

"How is it that Dodger finds boarding cheaper than housekeeping with his large family?"

"I suppose one reason is that he never pays his board bill."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

## A Great Combination.

Penelope—Don't you see the advantage? Richley—No; I do not.

Penelope—Why, you know how to make money, and I know how to spend it. What a team we'd make!—Life.

## Exceptions.

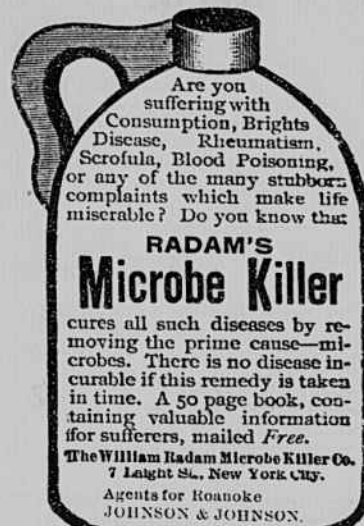
Henderson—Do policemen always run away when there is a fight going on?

Williamson—Oh, no. I saw six or seven of them rush right into a dog fight the other day.—Truth.

## The Retort Courteous.

Said the foreman to the printer One dull afternoon last winter, "You're a clever sort of chap, I don't deny. But you're worse than Jew or peddler. In the sense of being a meddler, For you've always got a finger in the pie!"

Here the printer let his copy Fall upon the floor so sloppily, As he answered, "Mr. Foreman, I shall stop Fingering the pi hereafter, So just cease your jokes and laughter, For you see, sir, I have let the matter drop."—Raymond's Monthly.



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